

Those of us in the Hudson Valley pay more than our fair share of taxes. Middle class families today are being squeezed from all sides by ever-increasing costs. From 2000 to 2006, the median household income in New York rose by less than 1%, meaning many New Yorkers today earn no more than they made a decade ago. Meanwhile, the costs of property taxes, health insurance, gasoline, housing and home heating, and college costs have all increased substantially. A top priority for me as your Representative is to lower the overall tax burden on the people of the 19th district, to enable you to keep more of your hard earned income.

AMT Reform: Keeping a Millionaire's Tax from Hitting the Middle Class

The Alternative Minimum Tax, or AMT, was created to prevent the wealthiest Americans from using loopholes to circumvent paying federal taxes. However, tens of thousands of middle class families across the Hudson Valley are now being ensnared by this tax that was never intended for them.

The Hudson Valley is disproportionately affected by the AMT. In 2007, more than 30,000 families paid the AMT in New York's 19th Congressional District. Only 12 other districts in the country have a larger number of families that will pay the AMT this year.

Taxpayers in the 19th District pay an average of close to \$4,000 more in federal taxes as a result of the AMT continuing to encompass significantly more families than it was originally designed to.

Comprehensive, permanent AMT reform is one of my top priorities in Congress. We have successfully prevented the AMT from expanding even further. I have voted on four different occasions to prevent the AMT from expanding further to affect more than 100,000 families in the Hudson Valley, however that is insufficient for the 30,000 Hudson Valley families still subject to AMT. I strongly believe that working families should not have to pay a tax intended for millionaires.

Property Taxes

Property taxes in the Hudson Valley are too high and continue to escalate annually. Within the last decade, property tax levels in parts of the 19th Congressional District have increased by as much as 80%, and in other areas they are three times the national average. Property taxes are set at the local level; however, there are ways I at the federal level can help to reduce them. We can ease the overall tax burden by making what we pay in federal taxes better take into account the local tax burden. I am a cosponsor of the Property Tax Relief Act of 2007 (H.R. 3726), which will allow all taxpayers to deduct the amount of money they spend on local property taxes from their federal tax return. This would enable those who take the standard deduction, not just people who itemize on their federal income taxes, to save money. Through my efforts, a version of this important legislation was included in the Housing Bill that became law in July, 2008.

In addition I have worked to limit unfunded mandates from the federal government, by ensuring that programs Congress orders are fully paid for by Congress. This will take some of the pressure off of the state and local governments to support and finance federal initiatives that the federal government has failed to adequately fund.

Tax Breaks to Make College More Affordable

College expenses have soared in recent years. In only four years, the average cost of tuition, fees, room and board at both public and private colleges in New York increased over 20%. That sort of an increase during the time it takes a student to graduate is too much for most families to bear.

To help alleviate this situation, I have cosponsored H.R. 2411, the DIPLOMA Act, comprehensive education credit and deduction legislation that would give education tax breaks to all families. Families making up to \$160,000 could deduct all college-related expenses, including tuition and fees, room and board and textbooks. Families exceeding those levels would be given a fully refundable credit for college-related expenses up to \$1500 and half of all expenses up to \$4000.

Tax Relief for the Middle Class

I'm a cosponsor of the H.R. 2902, the Middle Class Opportunity Act, a collection of tax cuts to help hard-working American families.

To help people care for their children and elderly relatives, the bill doubles the child tax credit and expands the dependent care credit to include expenses associated with caring for parents or grandparents. To increase access to higher education, the bill creates one simple, easy-to-understand education tax credit. The bill also extends AMT relief to stop the AMT from hitting millions of additional taxpayers.